

SPEECH

OF

HON. SAM'L CALVIN, OF PENN.,

ON

THE REFERENCE OF THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, AND THE CORRESPONDENCE
OF SIR HENRY LYTTON BULWER ACCOMPANYING THE SAME,
ON THE SUBJECT OF THE TARIFF OF 1846,

Delivered in the House of Representatives of the U. S., May 15, 1850.

Mr. CALVIN rose and said: I regard, sir, the British Government as aiming a blow in this correspondence at the great industrial interests of this country generally, but more particularly at the great iron and coal interests of Pennsylvania. And, sir, as I have the honor to represent on this floor what has been justly called the "Iron district" of my native State, I will ask the indulgence of the House, whilst I submit a few remarks upon these two subjects, in connection with this extraordinary correspondence.

It is well known, sir, to you, and to this House, that Pennsylvania is rich in mineral resources; that her mountains are full of iron and coal; that she has great water power; that a large portion of her immense capital is invested in the mining of coal and in the manufacture of iron; and that a still larger portion of her hardy, industrious, and intelligent population depend upon these two great interests for support, and for the education and maintenance of their families. It is also well known that, for the purpose of carrying her coal and iron, and other productions to market, she has nearly completed the most stupendous system of internal improvements to be found on this continent. In the construction of canals and railroads, she, and the incorporated companies within her limits, have expended between one and two hundred millions of dollars.

In view of this state of facts, I presume it will not be deemed extraordinary that this correspondence has attracted the attention, and excited the indignation of her people.

Under the influence of the protective policy—a policy coeval with the earliest legislation under the Constitution, but the foundations of which were not fully laid till the passage of the act of 1816—these two great interests were, generally speaking, prosperous, until, under the operation of the compromise tariff of 1833, by which

[GIDEON & Co., Print.]

the duties were gradually let down lower and lower till they reached a horizontal level of twenty per cent. *ad valorem*, they were utterly prostrated and overwhelmed by the tide of competition of foreign labor. This great State, with her mighty resources and energies, was smitten as by paralysis—lay prostrate like the huge giant, bound, manacled. Bankruptcy and ruin covered the whole State as with a pall. Individuals, companies, corporations, the State herself, all were bankrupt. To use the expressive language of my venerable friend from Ohio, (Mr. Corwin,) “we were insolvent generally.” Such was the condition of Pennsylvania at the date of the tariff act of 1842. But, under the benign influence of that law, these great interests awoke as from the dead, and sprang forth with the freshness and vigor of life. Manufactures, commerce, agriculture, revived; this great State was again upon her feet, and again entered upon her proud career of prosperity and power.

But this state of things was destined to be of short continuance. The Presidential campaign of 1844 was approaching. The Baltimore Convention met, and Mr. Van Buren, for the only honest act of his political life perhaps, was decapitated, and James K. Polk, of Tennessee, was selected as the candidate of the Democratic party. It is not necessary that I should name his illustrious competitor. It was well known that Pennsylvania had always been attached, without distinction of party, to the protective policy, and that she was especially friendly to the tariff of 1842, which had just lifted her up from general bankruptcy and ruin to a state of prosperity and happiness. Then, as now, it was generally believed that no candidate could reach the Chief Magistracy of this great country against whom Pennsylvania might cast her electoral vote. It was therefore deemed important by the Democratic party, to secure that vote; and, sir, how was this accomplished? Why, sir, we were assured by all the leading journals, and by all the small journals, by all the great politicians, including Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Dallas, and by all the little politicians of the modern Democratic party, from one end of the State to the other, that Mr. Polk was a “better tariff man than Mr. Clay,” and that “the Democratic Tariff of 1842” would be safer in the hands of Mr. Polk than in those of the great author of the American system. We were also assured in a certain Kane letter, that Mr. Polk was in favor of protecting all the great industrial interests of the country, including commerce, agriculture, and manufactures. And we were still further assured, as all will remember, by “Mr. Polk’s near neighbor,” that he was “the especial friend of the great coal and iron interests of Pennsylvania.” And, as if this were not enough, “Polk, Dallas, Shunk, and the Democratic Tariff of 1842,” was spread out in large letters upon the Democratic banners, and carried at the head of the Democratic processions. Well, sir, Pennsylvania believed these representations; she cast her vote for James K. Polk and Geo. M. Dallas, and the illustrious statesman of the West was defeated.

Among the first acts of the newly elected President was the selection of James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, as his Secretary of State, and Robert J. Walker, a native of Pennsylvania, as his Secretary of the Treasury. Did not this look like an earnest for the redemption of the pledges which had been given to us?

Well, sir, Mr. Walker entered upon the duties of his office—upon his great task of reform, upon his great labor of love; and we were assured, you will remember, that he labored hard; that so violent was the action of his powerful intellect upon a weak frame, that he was frequently known to faint in the midst of his toils. We are told, sir, that all things earthly must have an end, and these labors were at last brought to a conclusion. And what was their result? Although not one single petition, I believe, had been sent up from any part of this great country, asking for any change in the revenue policy of the Government, and least of all such change as he gave us, this great financier resolved to change that whole policy. Disregarding the example of this Government from its earliest history, and the example of all

civilized governments; pouring contempt upon the wisdom and experience of the past, he repudiated the great principle of specific duties, rejected it as unworthy a place in his wonderful plan of financial reform, and substituted in its place the *ad valorem* principle, and with a foreign valuation. In a word, sir, we had, as the offspring of these extraordinary labors, the Tariff act of 1846, and the profoundly learned report upon finance and revenue which accompanied it.

This, sir, is not the proper time for entering upon the discussion, at any length, of the merits, or rather demerits, of this act of 1846. I trust I may have another opportunity, before Congress shall adjourn, of entering more extensively upon this subject. Suffice it to say, at this time, that this act has three prominent characteristics. In the first place, it destroys American shipping and American commerce, and builds up and promotes British shipping and British commerce. Its second characteristic, is, that it offers premiums, holds out rewards to perjury, and every species of fraud and villany upon the revenue of the country. Its third not less distinguishing characteristic, is, that it gives protection to American industry when it is not needed, and withdraws from it all protection at the very moment when it *is needed*; at the very moment when, about to be overwhelmed by the competition of foreign labor, it is extending its supplicating hands to the Government for relief, to save it from utter ruin.

The consequences of this measure were distinctly foreseen and foretold at the time of its passage; and although, in consequence of the extraordinary state of things existing in Europe at that time, and for some time afterwards, the evil day came not as soon as was expected, the *night* is now upon us, with all its darkness. The railroad mania, which prevailed all over the continent of Europe, and the famine, which was not less prevalent in that same region of the world, postponed for a season the pernicious consequences of this measure, but now they are upon us in all their blighting power. I confine my remarks to the iron and coal interests of Pennsylvania, leaving to other and abler hands to show the condition of the other great industrial interests of the country. The coal mines of our State, in which millions of capital have been invested, have been rendered unproductive, unprofitable. Some have been sold by the sheriff, others abandoned to dilapidation and ruin. I am informed that the sheriff is the only man now making money in the great coal fields of Schuylkill county; and that the population of that county has been reduced about four thousand within the last twelve or fourteen months. A large portion of our numerous iron establishments throughout the State—I would say the *larger* portion of them—have been broken up, sold by the sheriff, or have suspended; and the little remnant are now sending up their daily petitions to us to save them from the ruin that must speedily overwhelm them also. Our great agricultural interests must soon also feel the shock, and share in the common ruin. They must soon be deprived of a home market, and they will look in vain for a foreign one. The consumers must become producers and competitors with the present farmers for a market at present overstocked. The immense importations of foreign manufactures and productions, beyond all precedent, now flooding the country under the present tariff, is a just subject of anxiety and alarm. The debt incurred this year, it is estimated, must reach the enormous sum of \$40,000,000, if it do not exceed it. Not all the gold of California will enable us to meet the drafts that must soon be made upon us. The utter prostration of all the industrial interests of the country—revulsions, suspensions, universal bankruptcy—all are perceptible in the distance. They will soon be upon us like a tempest, as they were brought upon us by the Compromise Tariff of 1833. Will we take the proper measures to prevent these calamities to the country?

Much, sir, has been said in this House about Northern aggressions, and about the great amount of loss sustained by the South, in consequence of the escape of their slaves into the free States, and their inability to recover them. Now, I venture to

affirm, without wishing to underrate or understate the amount of this loss, that Pennsylvania alone has lost more within the last eighteen months, under the ruinous operation of the Tariff of 1846, than would pay for all the runaway slaves, from all the slave States for the last half century.

I presume all remember the extraordinary favor with which this Tariff act of 1846, and the very learned report accompanying it, were received in England. Why, sir, the statesmen of her Britannic Majesty's Government were smitten with astonishment at the wonderful wisdom of this prodigy of learning in financial science, which brother Jonathan had produced; and they paid him the unprecedented compliment of a publication of his learned report by order of Parliament. I presume it will also be remembered, as a part of the history of this bill, that in a discussion which took place in the House of Commons, some time after it had gone into operation, upon the then condition and future destiny of the Canadas—upon their probable independence, and future annexation to the United States—that Sir Wm. Molesworth, a distinguished member of the lower House, argued, that they were then a tax, a burden, upon the revenues of the Government; and that their annexation to the United States, would not only relieve the treasury of a great burden, but would add greatly to the commercial prosperity of the kingdom. He exclaimed, that “our commerce with our American colonies (meaning the United States, and he said he would insist on calling them their colonies) is twice as profitable as all our other commerce with all our other colonies upon the face of the globe.” And the interesting feature of this profitable commerce, as he said, was, that it cost the mother country not one cent, not one farthing, for standing armies, for fortifications, harbors, light-houses, &c. All these expenses were paid by the dutiful colonies themselves.

And now, sir, when under the operations of this tariff our coal mines have been rendered unproductive, some sold by the sheriff, others abandoned to dilapidation and ruin; when a large portion of our numerous iron establishments, our furnaces, our forges, and rolling mills have become silent, their fires put out; when our canals and railroads have also been rendered, to some extent, unprofitable, and some of them destined to fall into dilapidation and decay, if this policy shall be continued; when the immense importations threaten to overwhelm all the great industrial interests of the country with ruin; when thousands and tens of thousands of our industrious and intelligent citizens have been turned adrift with their families to starve, or beg, or work for ten cents per day; I say, when under these circumstances of ruin and distress, our patriotic and distinguished Chief Magistrate recommends to Congress a modification of the present tariff, so as to save and to protect all the great interests of the country, we are met, sir, with a protest from her Britannic Majesty's Government! Here it is:

BRITISH LEGATION, *September 3, 1850.*

SIR: It having been represented to her Majesty's Government, that there is some idea on the part of the Government of the United States to increase the duties on British iron imported into the United States, I have been instructed by her Majesty's Government to express to the United States Government the hope of her Majesty's Government, that no addition will be made to the duties imposed by the present tariff of the United States, which already weigh heavily on British productions; and I cannot but observe, for my own part, that an augmentation of the duties on British produce or manufactures, made at the moment when the British Government has, by a series of measures, been facilitating the commerce between the two countries, would produce a very disagreeable effect on public opinion in England.

I avail myself of the opportunity to renew to you the assurance of my most distinguished consideration.

HENRY L. BULWER.

HON. JOHN M. CLAYTON, &c., &c., &c.

And so, sir, this tariff, which met with the greatest commendation from the statesmen of her Britannic Majesty's Government, and the report accompanying which, was published by order of the British Parliament; this tariff, which was re-

arded as having reduced us again to a state of colonial vassalage, and which had rendered the commerce of England with her American colonies twice as valuable as all her other commerce with all her other colonies on the face of the globe; this British tariff, at the christening of which her Britannic Majesty's Government stood god-father, has become exceedingly oppressive—"weighs heavily upon British productions!" And yet, the hope is expressed, very modestly to be sure, that we will crush it not! And to repress the audacity of any turbulent spirit from any such attempt, we are very kindly informed in advance, that any such attempt "would produce a very disagreeable effect upon public opinion in England." And, sir, we are therefore expected carefully and dutifully to abstain from interfering in the slightest degree with a measure thus dear to the mother country, notwithstanding it does bring beggary and ruin upon our own people.

And if we dare to lay our vulgar hands upon this wonderful specimen of financial wisdom, I presume we may expect to receive another protest, a protest from Sir Robert Walker, to be added to the protests of Sir Robert Peel, Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer, and Lord John Russell, and of all the other sirs and lords of her Britannic Majesty's Government. We may be favored, perhaps, with a still further protest from another degenerate son of Pennsylvania, who, in the hour of her trial, had it in his power to save her, but who lifted up his heel against her. I need not name him. He was bidding for the Presidency; he had his eye upon the Baltimore Convention of 1848. But, sir, it rejoiced my heart to see him treated, as traitors have often been treated; although the treason was loved, the traitor was despised and rejected.

I desire, sir, to say nothing personally offensive of Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer. He is the minister, the representative of the British Government; and has but discharged his duty by obeying the instructions of his Government. I have no doubt of the able, talented, and accomplished diplomatist and gentleman which he has represented to be. But, sir, I must be permitted to denounce this interference of his Government, as did our able Senator in the other wing of the Capitol, as unprecedented, impertinent, arrogant, and highly offensive. It is no doubt true, that Great Britain has, for the last two or three centuries, played a most conspicuous part in the great theatre of the world. She has been long distinguished for her wisdom, her prowess, her great wealth and power, and for many of those great attributes that constitute national glory. But I affirm, and the whole civilized, and the whole barbarous world will bear testimony to the truth of what I say, that she has been still more distinguished for her pride, for her arrogance, for her insatiable cupidity, and inordinate ambition. She grant commercial facilities! when, without any equivalent? She grant concessions! when? where? In what period of the world? In what period of her history? She grant concessions! O, yes, sir, I remember, rather I have heard, of some concessions which she did grant. She conceded, I believe, independence to our Revolutionary sires; and at a later period she conceded to their sons the right to navigate the high seas, without daring to exercise her pretended right of impressment. But, sir, these, are the only concessions which she grants—concessions wrenched from her by the mighty hand of superior power.

Now, let us look a little into the practical operations of this new doctrine. If her Britannic Majesty, Sir John Bull, is to be permitted to interfere with our domestic affairs, and to dictate our course of legislation, brother Jonathan, I presume, will not be an In-di-vi-du-al, not only remarkably well qualified for attending to his own business, but who has a *penchant* for looking a little into the business of his neighbor. He is, in a word, a reformer. The spirit of chivalry, of which we have heard

much on this floor, was not more illustriously developed in the celebrated knight of De La Mancha, than is in Jonathan this spirit of reform, of improvement, of progress. And if this wide field be thrown open to him, think you, sir, he will not enter upon it with alacrity? And what would be his first step in the glorious career before him? Why, sir, I imagine, as he is said to be fond of his kith and kin, he would in the first place "express the hope," modestly of course, to Sir John, that he strike off the shackles of sweet old Ireland, restore to her her independence, and cease any longer to oppress and grind her gallant people in the dust. I imagine he would then take a peep into Sir John's East India possessions; and I have no doubt his sagacity would enable him to suggest divers reforms calculated to relieve and ameliorate the condition of that oppressed country. But, as Jonathan is said to have an eye single to his own interests generally, in his great reforms, I presume he would invite Sir John's attention to his possessions on this side of the waters, and would "express him the hope," modestly of course, that he would see the wisdom and propriety of surrendering up the Canadas and his North American possessions, and of permitting them to become *re-annexed* to the United States—intimating to him, in the most delicate manner in the world, that he considered himself abundantly able to take charge of the whole North American continent, and of the South American also, if it should become necessary. As Jonathan is said to be affected with a considerable share of "prying curiosity," I imagine he would not be content with these external reforms, but would desire to examine a little into the domestic establishment of Sir John. And here, sir, he would find a glorious field for the display of his talents. I imagine he would, in the first place, suggest, in a very delicate manner of course, to Sir John, the propriety of his abolishing his immense and oppressive Church establishment, of enlarging the basis of representation in the House of Commons, and of granting, to every *white* subject at least, the right of suffrage in electing the members of the lower House. But, when he should come to the House of Lords and the Throne, what think you would he do? Here, he would exclaim, are evils beyond the reach of reform. What would he do? He would cast, sir, his pruning knife upon him. He would insist upon the abolition of the whole system, upon the utter annihilation of the whole race of Kings, Queens, Princes, Dukes, and Lords, and the establishment of a great English Republic. And if Sir John should be startled if he should suggest that he had not in his kingdom statesmen of sufficient knowledge and experience to put such new machinery in motion, I have no doubt, Jonathan would pledge himself to rig out the whole establishment, with all the officers wanted from the presidency down to the clerkships, to the tide waiters. But this doctrine I presume, would lead to broils, to broken heads and bloody noses.

I take this occasion, sir, to express my thanks, and the thanks of my district not of the whole State, to our patriotic and worthy Chief Magistrate for his strong and decided recommendation of the great industrial interests of the country, to the favorable consideration of Congress, in his very able annual message.

I desire, also, to express our thanks in like manner to the distinguished Secretary of the Treasury, for his learned, luminous, and unanswerable argument in favor of the great principle of protection, contained in his report submitted to us at the close of our organization—a report which, as a great State paper, will compare favorably with any that has ever emanated from any Department of the Government. No man has he sustained the honor of the old Key Stone State, and his own great reputation.

I wish, sir, to see those parts of this message and correspondence, relating "to the duties imposed by the present tariff of the United States," referred to a select committee, a majority of which shall be friendly to the protective policy and to a modification of the Tariff of 1846, so as to protect American labor against the competition of foreign labor. We all know how the present standing committees of this House have been organized; and that to refer this message and correspondence, and

thousand petitions praying for a modification of the present tariff, to either the Committee on Manufactures or of Ways and Means, would be to consign them to the tomb of all the Capulets. Let us have a fair select committee, comprising a majority of the friends of a modification of the present tariff; (and I shall offer a resolution to this effect before I sit down, if in order;) let us have a bill reported, containing such modifications of the act of 1846, as the Administration and the friends of protection, think the suffering interests of the country require; let us have a hearing. This certainly is not asking too much.

We ask not for prohibitory, or for high protective duties. The age of prohibitions and stringent commercial restrictions, has passed away, not soon I presume to return. But we ask, so long as Congress shall continue to collect nearly all the revenues of the Government from duties and imposts on imported goods, that in the adjustment of those duties and imposts, they shall discriminate in favor of American labor, and American manufactures and products requiring protection. Upon such articles as have become necessities, and are consumed by all classes, the poor as well as the rich, and which we cannot manufacture or produce, let there be no duty; or, if some be necessary for the purpose of raising the necessary amount of revenue, let the duty be light. But upon all articles of luxury, and upon all such articles as the country possesses facilities for manufacturing and producing, and with the manufacture and reduction of which foreign labor is brought into ruinous competition, let the duties be high; sufficiently high, at least, to enable the American manufacturer and producer to compete with the foreign manufacturer and producer for the American market. In a word, let the burden of the revenues rest upon such articles of foreign manufacture and produce as are brought into ruinous competition with the like articles of American produce and manufacture.

This is what I understand by the principle of discrimination, a principle too evidently true and politic to admit of argument. It defies alike illustration and contradiction. He who would assail it, should assail the whole system of duties and imposts; should insist upon their total abolition, and the adoption of the system of direct taxation.

In the next place, let the principle of specific duties be adopted, wherever that principle is practicable; and where it is not practicable, let the home valuation be substituted for the foreign valuation. I will not at this time enlarge upon these topics. But, sir, let this Congress take up this subject, let us apply these principles in a judicious modification of the Tariff of 1846, so as to afford sufficient protection to all the great industrial interests of the country; let us abolish the Warehouse system, and restore the old principle of cash duties, and, sir, we will cover the country with blessings. And, sir, although much time has been wasted in useless wrangling, in painful crimination and recrimination betwixt different sections of this glorious country, we will be met on our return home, by our constituents, with the audit of well done good and faithful servants.

Mr. SPEAKER, I now offer the following resolution as an amendment, if in order:

Resolved, That so much of the President's message, and of the correspondence of Sir Henry Lytton as was accompanying the same, as relates to "duties imposed by the present tariff of the United States," be referred to a select committee of nine, with instructions to report by bill or otherwise."

The SPEAKER. The proposition of the gentleman from Pennsylvania is not in order at this time. It will be in order after the motion to refer to the standing committee shall be disposed of.

